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Tuesday, 14 Jun 2011

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A Word From Tim Downs - May



Dear Friends,

"RESTRUCTURING"

As I write this, we are preparing for the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference, Saturday, June 11, and shortly after this, General Synod, July 1, in Tampa. One of the significant conversations coming to General Synod is one around the restructuring of the national setting of the church to introduce a more effective coordination among ministries, and focus resources and staff more on mission than governance and structure. I believe that other settings of the church will experience the transition as one that brings greater coherence to our communications, and more effectiveness in the ways in which we coordinate our ministries together, for the building up of the United Church of Christ.



While this conversation has moved through a long and at times tedious process, another conversation is beginning to stir which might have a significant impact on the lives of the 38 conferences of the United Church of Christ. Here is a link to account of the conversation that was recently on [Keeping you Posted](#). In this article, you will see accounts of conferences exploring ways to share administration, staffing, and programming in various configurations. One proposal that may come to General Synod this year calls on the 38 conferences to become six. What impact would this have on the Southeast Conference, and what are we doing in the way of engaging this conversation in our own setting?

We too, for many years, have been looking at ways to collaborate with other settings of the United Church of Christ to strengthen our ministries and those of the whole church in all of its settings. We are a small conference, and our administration at this time is lean. There are no natural connections with our neighboring conferences. Many of these conferences are at different points in their development than the SEC. However, we have recently launched the Center for Progressive Renewal, working with the national setting of the UCC and other conferences. We felt that this organization would provide a foundation for the entire church to better equip and strengthen its new church and renewing church outreach. We are in collaboration with the Center for Progressive Renewal and Lancaster Theological Seminary as we prepare to launch Pathways, a four-year online program to train lay leaders, and licensed and ordained ministers for ministry. This program is expected to begin this fall. We have secured two grants for developing Pathways, one from the Fund for Essential Conference Ministries, and the other from the Brown Endowment, and are beginning to develop additional grants to fund the initial years of the program.



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A 'Just Peace' future: Part 2

Following the recently concluded World Council of Churches' International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica, United Church News asked Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite to reflect on the history, progress and potential future of the Just Peace movement.



As we look down the road there may be additional ways in which we can collaborate more fully with other settings and conferences of the UCC. We may come to share administrative functions, a search and call process, or find other ways in which to share programmatic staff. Whatever the future holds for us, my first commitment remains one of building up a vital and faithful United Church of Christ. We are living in interesting times indeed, and we in the Southeast have been graced with great resources of leadership and vision. I look forward to seeking ways in which we can share them with others, and perhaps benefit from the openness of others with their resources and staff. Join us at the Annual Meeting on Saturday June 11, in Atlanta, and you will hear more about these ideas, and have an opportunity to share some of your own!

Peace,

Tim Downs
Conference Minister

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May, 2011

Dear Friends in the Churches of Southeast Conference,

This letter is being sent along with information about the Regional Women's Meeting to be held October 7 -9, 2011 in Blowing Rock, North Carolina.

My request is that the materials be passed to a woman or women who will best be able to share with all the women of the church. The event may be months away, but plans need to be made soon. We hope the publicity will be circulated as soon as possible.

This regional meeting includes women from Southern, Southeast, Florida and South Central conferences – an exciting gathering of UCC women.

As has always been true in these meetings, the theme and workshop topics cover concerns and interests relevant to all of us. It will be an event not to be missed!

As I am the registrar for Southeast Conference, please direct questions to me. If I cannot provide the answer I will see that an answer is found with the women of Southern conference who are the hosts for the meeting.

I am looking forward to being with several, perhaps many, women of your church at Blowing Rock in October.

Praying for health and peace for all of us,

Nancy Sales

magoriannancy@yahoo.com

705 47th Way South, Birmingham, AL 35222

205-591-8908

**United Church of Christ Women's
SOUTHERN REGIONAL MEETING
BLOWING ROCK, NORTH CAROLINA
October 7-9, 2011**

A Faith Inspired Look Toward Wholeness

Theme Scripture: Proverbs 3:7-8 NIV

"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.
This will bring health to your body and nourishment to our bones."

Keynote Speaker: Ms. Barbara T. Baylor, MPH
Minister for Health Care Justice
Cleveland Conference Office

Bible Study Leader: Rev. Dian Jackson
Rockingham, NC

Entertainment: Glen Bolick – Mountain Story Teller and singer



Minister for Health Care Justice

United Church of Christ, Justice and
Witness Ministries

Sample of Workshops:

(Choice of Saturday AM or PM)

| | | |
|--|----|--|
| "Five Wishes" – Rev. Amanda Hendler Voss | // | "Self-Care Strategies" – Rev. Willie Mae Hawkins |
| "Healthy Cooking" – Jeanne Leonard | // | "Spiritual Wholeness" – Rev. Vertie Powers |
| "Mental Health" – Rev. Jo Sherer | // | "You Are What You Eat" – Ms. Roberta Perry |
| "Relationships" – Rev. Angie Wright | // | "Youth Suicide – GLBT" – Ms. Gwen Thomas |

Other Ongoing Happenings:

Silent Auction / Hospitality Area / Labyrinth / Massage Therapist / Beauty Consultant

REGISTRATIONS: Coordinated Through Individual States' Registrar:

(Regional Registrar: Ruth Parks, 144 Woodlawn St., Lexington, NC 27292)

COST: \$135-\$175 depending on accommodations selected (first in, first choice)

Come and join us. Meet friends from past regional meetings.

Relax in the beautiful surroundings of the North Carolina mountains. Renew Spirit, Vitality and Power

SOUTHERN REGIONAL MEETING OF UCC WOMEN
OCTOBER 7-9, 2011

Blowing Rock Conference Center

Registration Form

Name _____ Conference _____

Mailing _____ City, State, Zip _____

Cell-Phone () _____ Home Phone () _____

Email if available _____

In order to assist in making lodging assignments please list all persons who wish to share a room or cottage:

1. _____ 3. _____ 5. _____

2. _____ 4. _____ 6. _____

Packages include registration fee, all meals, and lodging. Please circle the package you prefer.

Package A Corriher Lodge each room has two double beds and a bath-can accommodate up to 4 people.

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 2 persons per room | \$168.00 per person |
| 3 persons per room | \$152.00 per person |
| 4 persons per room | \$144.00 per person |

Package B 3 locations- Rustic dorm-style rooms with shared bathrooms.
Cost per person \$134.00

Circle your preference of location: A. Rowe B. Calvin C. Youth Center

Package C 4 Cottages (must register together as a group of 5 or 6 persons; each cottage has one queen-size bed, two twin beds, and one bunk bed.

| | |
|---|----------|
| Cost of cottage for 6 persons (or \$134.00 per person) | \$804.00 |
| Cost of cottage for 5 persons (or \$148.00 per person) | \$740.00 |

Package D Day Participant Only
Cost-\$30.00 for registration fee plus cost for whichever meals you plan to eat on site.

Please circle meals you plan to eat:

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Fri. Dinner <u>\$11.00</u> | Sat. Breakfast <u>\$8.50</u> | Sat. Lunch <u>\$9.50</u> |
| Sat. Dinner <u>\$11.00</u> | Sun. Breakfast <u>\$8.50</u> | Sun. Box Lunch <u>\$9.50</u> |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Total amount for <u>Package D</u> | |
| Registration Fee | \$30.00 |
| Total Meals | \$ _____ |
| Total | \$ _____ |

Payment

Make check payable to Southern Regional UCC Women

| | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Total Cost of Package | \$ _____ |
| Total Amount Enclosed | \$ _____ |

General Information

1. Any dietary restrictions (be specific) _____

2. Handicap Needs (be specific) _____

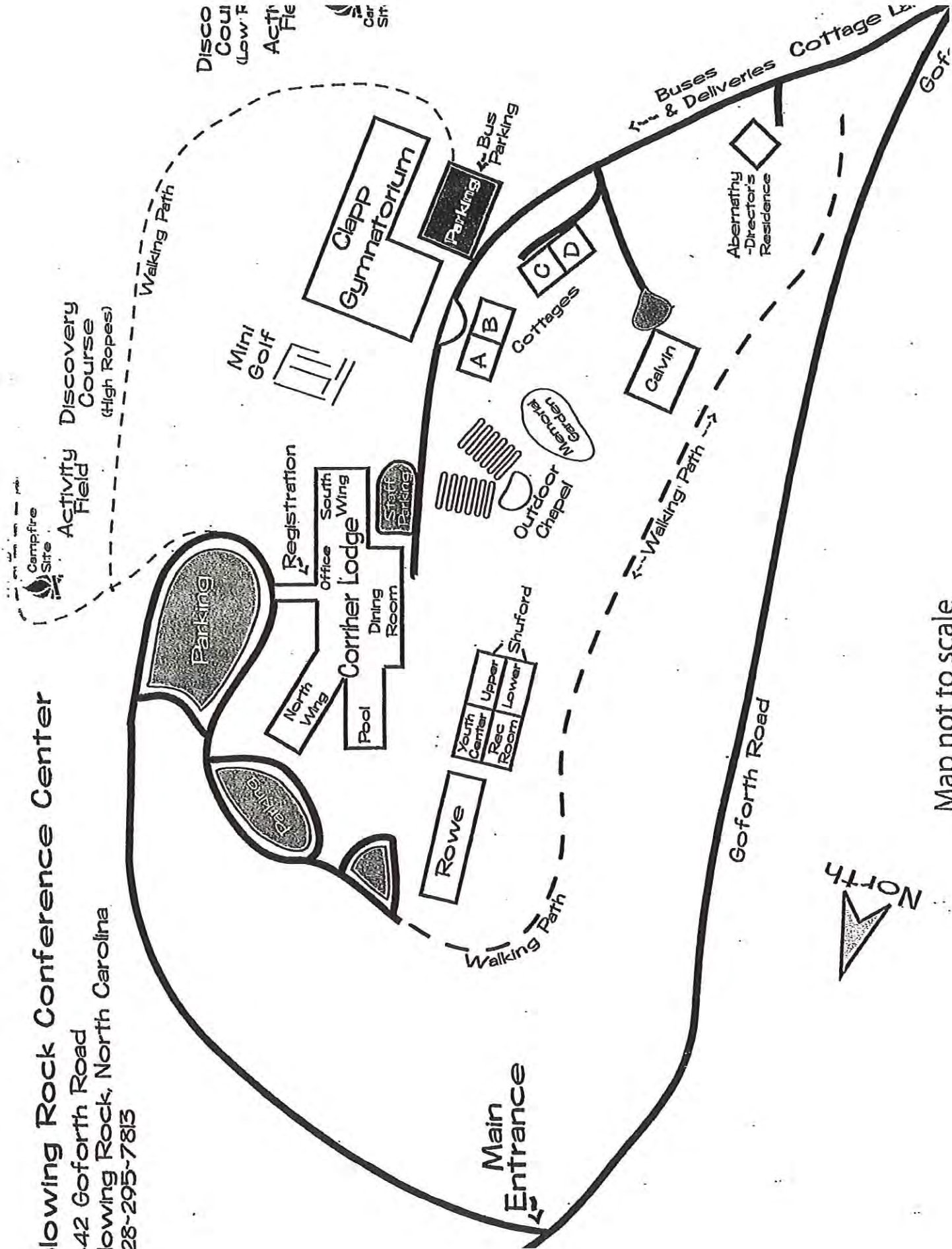
3. Wheelchair access needed _____
4. Will you need transportation from the Greensboro Airport? _____

If you travel by plane, please make arrangements to arrive as close to 2:00 p.m. as possible on Friday at the Piedmont Triad International Airport (PTI) in Greensboro, NC. Women from the Southern Conference will coordinate picking up participants and bringing them to Blowing Rock, which is approximately two hours away. The vans will leave for Blowing Rock after 2:00.

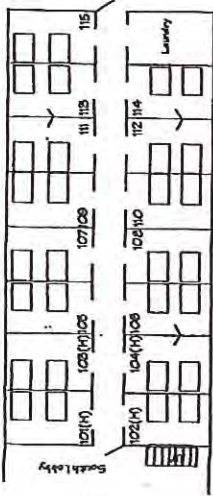
5. Because of confidentiality, may we publish your name, phone number, address, e-mail and any photograph taken for a specific purpose such as publicity?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Copy this form before mailing to your specific Conference Registrant.

Lowling Rock Conference Center

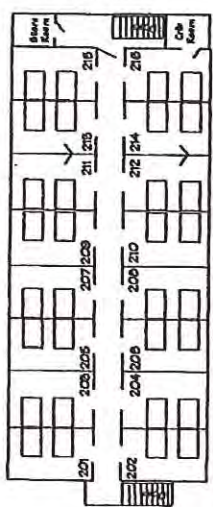
42 Goforth Road
 Lowling Rock, North Carolina
 28-295-7813



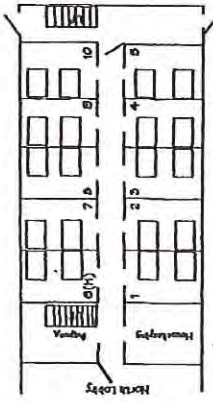
Corriner Lodge Guest Rooms



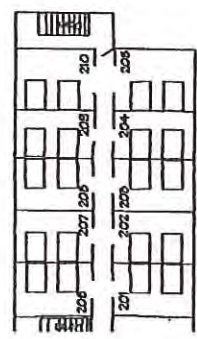
North Wing, Ground Level



North Wing, Upper Level



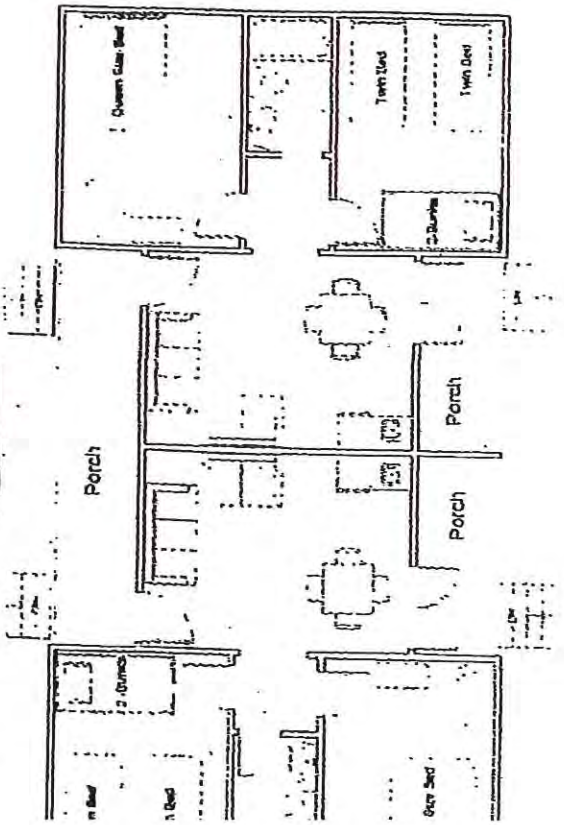
South Wing, Ground Level



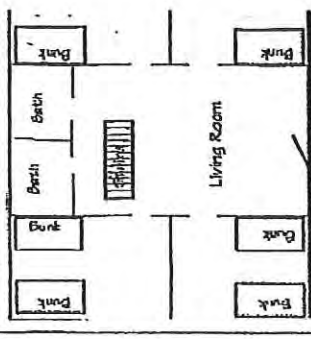
South Wing, Upper Level

Drawings are not to scale.
Each bedroom contains two full-size beds and a private bathroom.
North 6, South 101-102, 103 & 104 are handicapped accessible.
Adjoining rooms: South 104 & 106, South 111 & 113, South 112 & 114,
South 211 & 213, and South 212 & 214

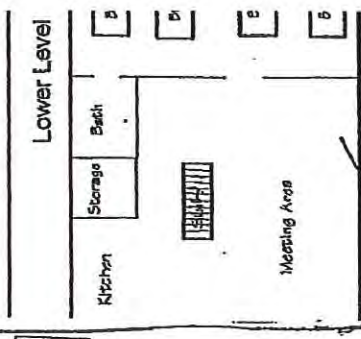
A&B or C&D Cottages



Calvin

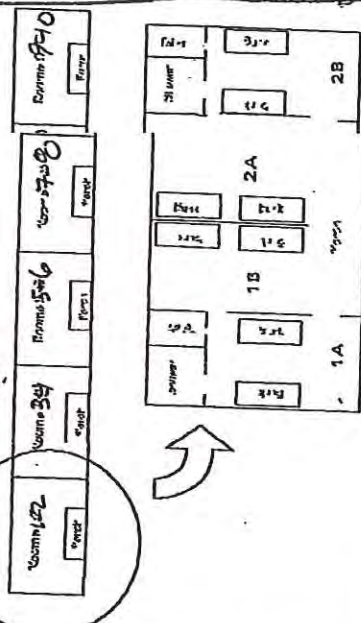


Upper Level



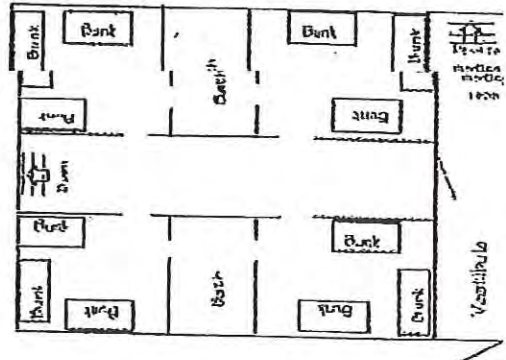
Lower Level

Rowe Dorm



Rowe Dorm has five sections. In each section there are four bedrooms, with sets of two b. becomes sharing a bathroom. Showers, bathroom, kitchen, towels and linens are provided.

Southern Conference Youth Center



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Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) — CHANGING LIVES!

The Board of Directors wants to thank all of our congregations who participated in Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support in 2010! We received a total of \$280,000 from our fifty churches, and in 2010 reduced the number of churches who gave nothing to OCWM Basic Support from fifteen to eight. Further, we have a growing number of churches who have committed to be Covenant Keepers that is to tithe 10% of their operating budgets to Basic Support. Basic Support is the essential support of the ministries of the United Church of Christ through the Conference, the national church, and around the globe. Below you will see a full list of all the churches and their contributions to both Basic Support and Special Offerings. You can see the great generosity of many of our congregations. We have just completed a new OCWM brochure, which is available for all our churches. [Link here for download of PDF format](#) or [request printed version from the SEC office](#) [request printed version from the SEC office](#).

We Begin with Acknowledgement of Our Nine 2010 Covenant Keepers:

- Holy Trinity Community UCC, Nashville,
- Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN,
- Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham,
- Liberty Christian Church, Brantley AL,
- Sandy Creek UCC, Lafayette, AL,
- Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta,
- Open Table Community of Faith, Mobile,
- Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson SC.

OCWM

BASIC SUPPORT /10

These churches represent almost 10% of our churches. It is noteworthy that of these nine churches, five of them are new or newly affiliated with the UCC. They will each be recognized during our Annual Meeting. Holy Trinity Community UCC in 2010 became the largest contributor of OCWM Basic Support to the Conference, giving \$40,389. Our second largest contributor is Pleasant Hill Community UCC at \$33,390. The next largest, while not a Covenant Keeper, represents a generous gift is Central Congregational UCC at \$32,455.

Another Group of Congregations Gave Generously at about 5% or Above Their Operating Expenses.

- Beloved Community UCC, Birmingham
- First Congregational Christian UCC, Birmingham

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Headlines from the United Church of Christ

[A 'Just Peace' future: Part 2](#)

Following the recently concluded World Council of Churches' International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica, United Church News asked Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite to reflect on the history, progress and potential future of the Just Peace movement.



- First Congregational Church UCC, Birmingham
- United Church UCC, Huntsville
- Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery
- First Congregational UCC, Atlanta
- Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta
- Bethany Congregational UCC, Thomasville, GA
- Jones Chapel UCC, Woodbury, GA
- Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston
- First United UCC, Belvedere, TN
- Fairfield Glade Community Church, TN
- Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville
- Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville

Giving under \$1,000 to OCWM Basic Support:

- Virginia Highland Church (A Baptist and UCC Congregation), Atlanta
- Unity UCC, Montgomery
- Demorest Federated Church, Demorest GA
- Evergreen Congregational UCC, Beachton, GA
- Oakgrove Christian Church, Pine Mountain, GA
- Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville

The Churches, Which Gave Nothing to OCWM in 2010:

- Kings Chapel, Alpine AL
- First Congregational UCC, Marion AL
- Sankofa UCC, Atlanta,
- Church of the Savior, Roswell, GA
- First Congregational UCC, Savannah
- Plymouth Congregational UCC, Charleston
- New Hope Congregational Christian Church, Clio, AL

Over the course of 2011, we invite you to educate your members about OCWM, the

ways in which it touches and changes lives around the world. Be in touch with our conference office if you would like a presentation to your church at worship, or for your leadership. We remain deeply grateful for all you have done. Over the last fifteen years your giving to OCWM has increased by 60%, and transformed this conference into one of the most generous conferences in the United Church of Christ on a per capita basis. Thank you!

>> [Link here to read full list of OCWM Giving.](#)

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News From Our Local Churches - May



Church Staff Takes Peek at Renovation

April 27, 2011, Rev. Dwight Andrews, pastor of First Congregational Church UCC, Atlanta, Bette Graves Thomas, Church Administrator and Secretary of the conference Board of Directors, and Technical Director, Dan Fishman, were given a brief, escorted tour of the church renovation work. They walked through the ground floor and saw the new Fellowship Hall space with its level floor and high ceiling. Upstairs, they walked into the Sanctuary space and saw the raised, concrete platform that will become the new pulpit, chancel, and choir area. The window openings on the back wall will be filled-in, and a new back wall to the chancel area will be built.

As she observed the old church building exposed and the design of the renovated church emerging, Bette exclaimed, "...it just takes my breath away!" Bette is a lifelong member of First Church and grew-up in the historic church at the corner of Houston (now John Wesley Dobbs Avenue) and Courtland Streets. The Building Renovation Committee is planning short, guided tours of the church renovation in May for interested church members.



Reception as Member Church into the United Church of Christ

Peace Congregational UCC, in Clemson SC celebrated their reception as a member church into the United Church of Christ on Sunday, May 8, 2011 at a 5:00 p.m. worship service. Almost 60 individuals signed as charter members. Led by



of Peace Church, led the congregation in the Affirmation of Covenant. Rev.

Susie Smith welcomed Rev. Susannah M. Davis, pastor of Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta, who

Pastor Susie Smith, Peace UCC has ground breaking ministries in upcountry South Carolina reaching out to GLBT youth and modeling a "love of our mother earth." Tim Downs, Conference Minister, and Rev. Allen Mullinax, Chair of Church and Ministry for the Georgia-South Carolina Association, led the congregation in the Covenant litany and prayers. Dianne King, Moderator



delivered the sermon. The Georgia South Carolina Association is extremely proud to welcome this new church into a covenanted partnership with bonds of grace and love. A pot luck dinner followed the service.



First Congregational Talladega Recognized as Historical Landmark

On Sunday, May 15th, 2011, First Congregational United Church of Christ of Talladega, AL celebrated its 143rd Anniversary and Dedicatory Services as a State of Alabama Historic Landmark. Several dignitaries, guests, and friends and family of the congregation were in attendance, including Dr. Billy Hawkins, President of Talladega College, as well as representatives of local government, the Alabama Historic Commission, and the Amistad Research Center of Tulane University. Kathy Clark, Associate Conference Minister, represented the Southeast Conference and offered remarks at the unveiling of the historic landmark. Rev. Arthur Price, Jr., pastor of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, AL, supported by the church's Praise Team, was the keynote preacher. Ms. Sadie Currie led the committee that secured the historic landmark status. The Historic Landmark Marker reads:



The Community House - In 1867, the American Missionary Association helped establish Talladega College. Reverend Henry E. Brown served as the first principal of the school. On May 17, 1868, Rev. Brown established the First Congregational Church with 17 members. Between 1868 and 1927, they worshipped in DeForest Chapel at Talladega College. The Trustees of the

First Congregational Church of Talladega incorporated the church in 1908. In 1928, community volunteers constructed the church's first building in ten weeks. Known as the Community House, they dedicated it as the First Congregational Church of Talladega on February 27, 1927. This site is listed in the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage.

Congratulations to our sisters and brothers of the First Congregational UCC in Talladega!

A Reverse Mission Trip

Rebecca Shillingburg, member of **Church of the Savior**, Roswell, GA reports that the church is co-sponsoring a Burmese refugee family. COS will share their experiences with us in the coming months. This is their first co-sponsorship (or as Tom likes to say, a **"reverse mission trip"**). Monday Rebecca showed Hser Gay (the mom) how to vacuum while Ku Kuh (the dad) was going to RRISA. **What an experience!** [Link here to read more of the story.](#)



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Lifting Up . . . May



Travis Moon, husband of Betty Moon and member of Sandy Creek UCC, LaFayette, AL, died suddenly this month. Betty and Travis were both very active in the East Alabama-West Georgia Association and shared a tremendous love for the United Church of Christ. Betty asks that you keep her and her family in prayer.

We were saddened to hear the news of the death of **Shannon Childress**, the Assistant Choir Director at Holy Trinity Community Church UCC, Nashville. Shannon had a long struggle with cancer. Pastor Cindy Andrews-Looper and the Holy Trinity choir led the memorial service which took place in Kentucky May 21st.

UCC local churches in North Carolina and Alabama are assisting residents with food and water as they are able. Even though some members had damage to or lost their homes, outreach to the whole community is their focus. To assist these efforts a total of \$10,000 from One Great Hour of Sharing has been sent to these local churches.

The **UCC Ohio Conference** as part of its disaster response ministries prepares and stores clean up buckets and hygiene kits. On Wednesday last week, two members of the Ohio Conference disaster team drove a truck filled with 600 clean up buckets; and 540 hygiene kits to Birmingham, Alabama. The kits were delivered to First Congregation Church UCC where members of our area local churches unloaded the truck. These kits will go to homeowners to assist in cleanup of damaged homes and to provide essentials such as a toothbrush and toothpaste.

Photos on [box.net](#)



Victory Church, Stone Mountain, GA where a church member lost 5 members of her family in the storm in Alabama.



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Feature Focus - May 2011



IMAGINE! WHAT IS POSSIBLE?

The Southeast Conference Gathers for its Annual Meeting June 11th.

Many of us have become used to a certain rhythm to our Annual Meetings in the Southeast Conference, but this year we are introducing some significant changes. In an effort to make the experience more affordable and accessible, the meeting will take place for only one day, Saturday, June 11th. We will also make this an opportunity for us to build a greater sense of community and celebrate the creativity in congregations of our conference. Our opening worship will be led by



Kirkwood UCC and our closing worship by Praxis UCC, both of which are new church starts in the Atlanta area. We will have a panel featuring pastors of various churches across the conference which have gone through transitions that have led to greater vitality and faithfulness in ministry. There will be a time before the beginning of the Annual Meeting for informal conversations in "Conversation Corners" with a number of our staff

and other resource people.

The business meeting will be kept as "streamlined" as possible, with one resolution, a proposal that we become a Global Mission Conference. All are encouraged to participate in a "Conversation Corner" from 9:15 am to 11:00 am. The Annual Meeting will be called to order at 11:00 am with opening worship. Following lunch there will be a panel of Southeast Conference pastors who are leading their communities into seasons of renewal. Check the schedule for details.

There are other ways in which we will foster fellowship and conversation. If there are matters of particular interest to you, and you would like to invite others into a conversation with you, you will be invited to sign up to lead the conversation around your particular interest. Others will have an opportunity to join your conversation, and we will have a time for you to report out to the whole gathering.

All of this is designed to build our community and to strengthen our connections with one another. Take a look at the conversations that will be available to you and imagine what is possible with all that is present across our conference and its



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[A 'Just Peace' future: Part 2](#)

Following the recently concluded World Council of Churches' International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica, United Church News asked Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite to reflect on the history, progress and potential future of the Just Peace movement.



Imagine that is possible that all that is present across our conference and its congregations!

**Panel of Southeast Conference Pastors Will Lead a Discussion of
“Imagine! What is Possible?”**

Four pastors and leaders of the Southeast Conference have been invited to be a part of a panel during our Annual Meeting to discuss ways in which they have brought vitality and vision to their particular ministry. Each of them comes from a setting for ministry quite different from others on the panel, and each brings special gifts to share! There will also be a time for questions and answers and deeper discussion. The panel will be moderated by the Vice-Moderator of the Conference, Jim Crabb, and will begin at 1:30.

Make sure you follow the links to Annual Meeting Materials.
The Southeast Conference 45th Annual Meeting

- > [The 45th Annual Meeting Information](#) - visit the [SEC Website](#)
- > [Annual Meeting Brochure & Registration](#) / [Just Registration Form for Annual Meeting](#)
- > [Online Meeting Registration](#)
- > **Annual Meeting Materials** - Will be coming soon. Watch the website.
- > [Conversation Corners](#) - Saturday | June 11 from 9:15 - 10:45 a.m.
- > [Lodging Information](#) for **Court Yard Executive Park** - Ask for Market Code UZRG (UCC Rate)

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Conference News - May



General Synod News



Reverend Elizabeth Mitchell Clement Will Preach

Elizabeth is a member of First Congregational Church, Atlanta and Conference Representative on the Board of Directors of the Office of General Ministries. On Tuesday, July 5, 2011 Elizabeth will preach at the closing worship of General Synod in Tampa, FL. Reverend Clement has been a significant voice in the formation of the Proposal for Unified Governance of the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

Congratulations, Rev. Clement!

Southeast Conference General Synod Delegates Meet in Preparation for Synod

The SEC has seven delegates ready for General Synod. We are up from three, just a few years ago, reflecting the growth in membership in the Conference. These delegates gathered with several of the Conference representatives elected to represent the Conference on the Boards of the Covenanted Ministries of the UCC, for a time of review and



reflection on the issues before us. The General Synod is a bi-annual gathering of the United Church of Christ. Its delegates are comprised largely of delegates elected from the conferences and the covenanted ministries. There are between 700-800 delegates. Visitors are not only welcomed to be at General Synod, but are encouraged to be a part of this dynamic view of the United Church of Christ. The Southeast Conference is encouraging churches to send as many visitors as they can given the proximity of Synod to our conference this year, and we have pared down our own annual meeting as a part of encouraging people to attend Synod.



This year the Synod will be considering a number of significant actions, including one to unify the governance of the United Church of Christ in the national setting,

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as well as a number of resolutions concerning a range of social justice issues. All of these can be seen at www.ucc.org. The delegation will meet each morning of Synod to review the business before the synod, and reflect together.

OCWM Changing Lives

The Board of Directors wants to thank all of our congregations who participated in Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support in 2010! We received a total of

**OCWM
BASIC SUPPORT /10**

\$280,000 from our fifty churches, and in 2010 reduced the number of churches who gave nothing to OCWM Basic Support from fifteen to eight. Further, we have a growing number of churches who have committed to be Covenant Keepers that is to tithe 10% of their operating budgets to Basic Support. [Link here for continued story.](#)

Sunnyside Georgia Tornado Relief

Members of various churches came together to start work on tornado damaged homes. Through coordination from the Fuller Center for Housing there were four Praxis UCC volunteers, lots of Mormons and a sprinkle of Baptists ready to lend a helping hand in rebuilding. [Link here to see photo images of the rebuild in process.](#)

National UCC Staff, Conference Staff and Volunteers Tour Tornado Damaged Communities in Alabama

SEC Responds with \$3,526 in Initial Gifts

On May 16, Tim Downs met with Florence Coppola, the UCC Executive Minister of National Disaster Ministries and Angie Wright, the coordinator of disaster response in Alabama to tour the tornado-devastated areas, and meet with FEMA staff and local UCC pastors. They visited areas west of Birmingham, and received briefings concerning the loss of an estimated 300 lives, and property damage estimated in the billions of dollars. >> [Link here to read a full update on the devastation in Alabama and how you can help.](#)

Share With Others Across the United Church of Christ

Do you want to share news of the exciting ministries of your church with others across the UCC? You can send a brief description of what you would like to share in the [UCC Calendar of Prayer to Rod Mundy](#) [UCC Calendar of Prayer to Rod Mundy](#) .

The Alabama-Tennessee Association

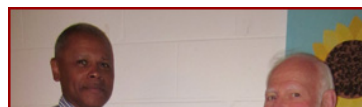


Alabama-Tennessee Association Holds Annual Meeting Hosted by Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga

On Friday May 13 and Saturday May 14, the Alabama-Tennessee Association gathered under the leadership of their retiring moderator Don Clark. The event was organized around the theme of exploring restorative justice, and Sala Nolan of

Justice and Witness Ministries of the UCC was a keynoter. The meeting also had workshops on subjects of the Tennessee Death Penalty, Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, Gender, Race and Incarceration, and Torture in our Time.

Following a time of active engagement with the issues, the Association gathered to conduct business, electing Gary Meyers



business, electing Gary Rogers, pastor of Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL as their new moderator. They passed a resolution advocating for reform in the criminal justice system and affirming restorative justice principles.

>> [Link here to read the meeting highlights.](#)



Debbie Douglas, a member of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN, and recent graduate of Eden Theological Seminary, was approved for ordination pending a call by the Alabama-Tennessee Association at an ecclesiastical council on Friday, May 13th.

The Georgia-South Carolina Association



Georgia-South Carolina Association Hold Annual Meeting Hosted by Victory United

Church of Christ, Stone Mountain

On April 16th, the Georgia-South Carolina Association gathered at Victory for its 2011 Annual Meeting under the leadership of its moderator Cornelius Watts.

>> [Link here to read last month's meeting highlights.](#)

The GA-SC Church and Ministry Committee took the following actions:

- Granted a license to minister to Jennifer Spears, who is serving as an associate at Garden of Grace UCC, in Colombia SC .
- Renewed the licenses to minister for: Glenna Shepherd, Jane Acuff, and Kathy Burton, all on staff of Decatur UCC, Decatur, GA.

United Church of Christ Women’s Southern Regional Meeting
Blowing Rock, NC,
October 7-9, 2011
[Link to flyer for more information.](#)

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Church of the Savior Goes on a "Reverse Mission Trip"

Committing to helping just one refugee family sounded like radical hospitality to us. Our small church is located in the midst of some of Atlanta's richer neighborhoods. When we look around us, it is tempting to think that we are poor. To co-sponsor a family, we had to step beyond our own perception of ourselves as a small, financially-constrained church to recognize that we live in one of the wealthiest nations of the world. To help the world's homeless, one family at a time, would remind us of our call to feed the hungry, to cloth the naked, and to welcome the stranger.

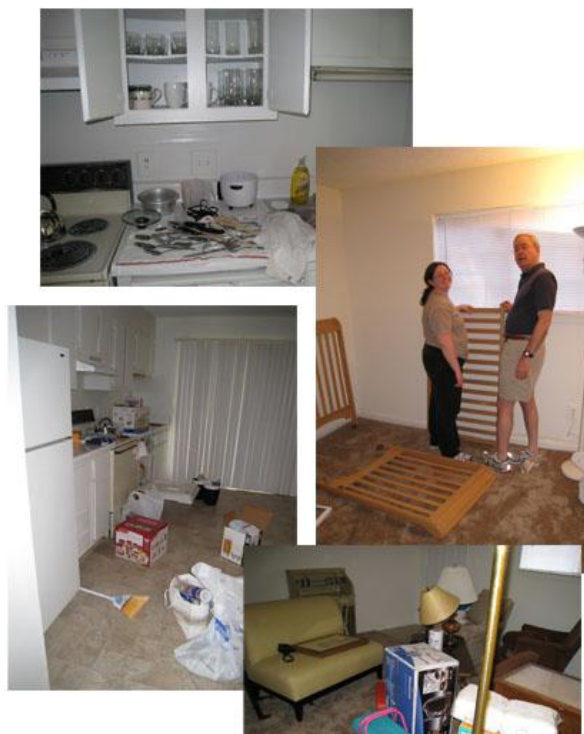
Working with RRISA, Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta, we committed to a "reverse mission trip," co-sponsoring a refugee family—to set up their apartment, to welcome them at the airport, and to provide them with their first meal here. This small act of hospitality was a big step of faith for our church community.

While initially we felt overwhelmed by the idea of being co-sponsors, we decided to venture into this unknown territory. We started by collecting the small household items; members signed up to bring different items on the list. Then we were ready to take the next step, finding gently used or new furniture. Despite our worries, people stepped forward with donations. One member of the church was downsizing her household and donated dressers, a desk, and a kitchen table and chairs. One family donated a used crib. Another family stocked the pantry and refrigerator. Others donated lamps. Even our children pitched in by helping us collect children's picture books from our class rooms. Soon we were ready to set up the apartment.



Loading up

Church of the Savior, a UCC community of Faith in Atlanta, GA



Some assembly required

Our hopes for this family seemed so tangible when we looked at all the books for this young child, books that would help the whole family learn English. After hanging a few pillow shams on the wall, we put out some books, toys, and a few stuffed animals for the young child in the family. As we left the apartment, we knew this place was ready to become a home. Amazed at how everything came together, we were eager to welcome our family.

When RRISA told us the apartment was available, we rented a van and delivered the furniture and household goods to the apartment. After unloading everything, we faced the three most dreaded words—some assembly required. The crib lay on the floor, and we discovered that it was missing a few pieces. We began to wonder if we, too, had a few loose screws. Was all this doable before the family arrived? Slowly but surely, we set up the apartment and discovered that we had everything that we needed and more.



Ready for our family to arrive

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Celebrations May 2011



We have received word that **Pastor Bennie Liggins**, pastor of Unity UCC in Montgomery and former associate conference minister for new church development of the Southeast Conference, was back in his pulpit on Sunday, May 15th. Several month ago Bennie Liggins entered the hospital for back surgery. Due to complications following surgery Bennie was in a coma for a period of time, and when he came out of it, he had lost mobility, dexterity and speech. Following the hospital stay he entered a rehabilitation facility, and was released several weeks ago, to return to the pulpit in May. He is on his way to a full recovery, and is easing back into pastoral duties. Unity UCC has described the experience as a refiners fire, which strengthen and built them in spirit. We are grateful to God, to the gifted leadership of Unity, and to all who held Bennie and the church in their prayers.



David Sigmund, who recently graduated from Candler School of Theology, was ordained in a service at Kirkwood UCC in the Atlanta area at 5:00 pm on Sunday May 15th. David has been called to serve the North Long Beach Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Long Beach, CA. He is also working as a consultant with the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC in the area of church renewal. This service was marked by

celebration of this first ordination at Kirkwood, a new church start led by Susannah Davis. Preaching for the occasion was John Blevins, a professor at Emory University, and representing in the Service of Ordination the Conference and the Association respectively were Conference Minister, Tim Downs, and Chrisanne Mayer. David's family was present including his partner, Jay.



Marlene Underwood, member in discernment and member of Rush Memorial Congregational UCC in Atlanta shares the news that she is the very grateful recipient of the Fund for Theological Education (FTE) North American Doctoral Fellowship and the Shelby Rooks Fellowship.



On May 22nd, during the



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morning service, **Michael Piazza** was installed by Conference Minister, Tim Downs as Senior Pastor of Virginia Highland Church (A Baptist and UCC Congregation), Atlanta. Also participating in the service was a representation of the Alliance of Baptists which is in ecumenical relationship with the UCC. Michael, who is serving as the co-director of the Center for Progressive Renewal, was until recently on the staff of the Cathedral of Hope, UCC, Dallas, Texas, the third largest church in the United Church of Christ. He accepted the call to Virginia Highland with the understanding that the church was committing itself to a strategy of renewal. Over the course of several months of ministry, the church has seen worship double in size and it is feeling a renewed sense of vision and energy.

We are pleased to announce that **Paige Pearson**, former pastor of United Church of Cookeville, UCC has accepted a call to serve First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Rockwood, TN.



Barbara Everett, member of Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN and member-at-large on the conference Board of Directors was named Volunteer of the Year 2010. [Link here to read more about her honor.](#)

Associate Conference Minister, Kathy Clark, became a grandmother for the third time. David Clark Bowling, Kathy's first

grandson, was born on April 28, 2011, weighing in at 8 lbs. 3 oz. **Welcome, David!**

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The SEC and UCC Respond as Hundreds of Homes are Destroyed in Waves of Severe Weather

This is an Alert on How You May Assist in This Time of Need

Devastating storms Wednesday spawned deadly tornadoes that moved across Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama. The purpose of this email is to alert you to the ways in which you and your congregation may respond to this catastrophe and to let you know how the **Southeast Conference** is responding. Currently, UCC churches across the Southeast Conference are providing immediate relief in their communities to those in need of food and water.

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AFP/Getty Images - Jessica McGowan

The **United Church of Christ's Disaster Ministries** anticipates participating in an ecumenical effort to assist people to repair and rebuild homes.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal declared four northwestern counties disaster areas after storms and tornadoes blew through the area. Governors of Mississippi and Alabama

of Mississippi and Alabama

also declared disaster areas, emergency management officials said.

In Alabama, the National Guard dispatched hundreds of personnel to some of the state's hardest hit areas. President Barack Obama announced late Wednesday he approved Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley's request for emergency federal assistance, including search and rescue support.

"While we may not know the extent of the damage for days, we will continue to monitor these severe storms across the country and stand ready to continue to help the people across the southeast and all citizens affected by these storms," Obama said in a statement. Most of the 154 tornado sightings reported to the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma, were from Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee, AccuWeather.com reported.

From Tim Downs - Here is What is Currently Happening:

1. The **United Church of Christ** has launched an emergency appeal to the entire church, and it is posted on www.ucc.org.

2. I have appointed [Angie Wright](#) and **LeNard Brown** to be our coordinators in response to this disaster, and I am working with our colleague in the national offices to get them the credentials they need to have access to the sites of damage.

3. Gifts are Being Given via Congregations in "Special Offerings."

If you wish to send contributions through the [Southeast Conference](#) we will also accept checks made out to "Southeast Conference UCC", and note in the memo "**OGHS Alabama Tornado Relief.**" You may donate online at the SEC by clicking button to the right.

4. Through **One Great Hour of Sharing** the SEC has already requested a \$2000 grant in aid to each of our churches which have members that have incurred losses in the tornadoes.

5. Online Donations are Being Made.

Make a secure online donation to the [OGHS International Disaster Relief Fund](#). Mark the gift being made for "**OGHS Tornado Relief.**"



OGHS Alabama Tornado Relief

6. Clean Up and Hygiene Kits are Being Donated.

Support of this program helps to ensure kits are available for immediate response after a disaster in another part of the world and here in the United States. For more information on kits follow link to [Church World Service](#) organization.

Our SECUCC Members:

A number of you have asked what impact the tornadoes have had on our churches and their membership. This is what I know:

- > Two families in Beloved Community UCC, Birmingham have lost their homes.
- > Two families of Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL have had significant damage, one family lost their home and car, and another lost the roof on their house.
- > One member of United Church Huntsville had a tree go through her roof. The church is mobilizing to help secure her house and prevent further damage.
- > Two families of Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville sustained damage to homes.

Please Pray for people who live in communities affected by tornadoes. Feel free to be in touch with me for any further information or details.

Thank you for your compassion and support.

[Timothy C. Downs.](#)
Conference Minister

Southeast Conference UCC
1330 West Peachtree Street, Suite 350
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 607-1993 Ext. 1
www.secucc.org

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AL-TN Association Meeting 2011



The Alabama-Tennessee Association Alabama-Tennessee Association Holds Annual Meeting Hosted by Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga

On Friday May 13 and Saturday May 14, the Alabama-Tennessee Association gathered under the leadership of their retiring moderator Don Clark. The event was organized around the theme of exploring restorative justice, and Sala Nolan of Justice and Witness Ministries of

the UCC was a keynoter. The meeting also had workshops on subjects of the Tennessee Death Penalty, Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, Gender, Race and Incarceration, and Torture in our Time.

Following a time of active engagement with the issues, the Association gathered to conduct business, electing Gary Meyers, pastor of Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL as their new moderator. They passed a resolution advocating for reform in the criminal justice system and affirming restorative justice principles.



Debbie Spearman, who attended the AL-TN meeting, reported on the workshops that took place.

1. **Female Incarceration and What We Can Do About It** by Rev. Sala W. J. Nolan Gonzales, Minister of Criminal Justice and Human Rights of the UCC. Sala outlined her experiences working within the penal system, especially with female prisoners.
2. **Broken Beyond Repair:** The Reality of Tennessee's Death Penalty by Denver Schimming, member at Holy Trinity Community Church UCC in Nashville, is the Field Organizer for Tennessean's for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Denver shared the facts about the failures of the system but also related personal stories of families of victims as well as those executed. He gave examples of how everyday citizens can get involved to change the current system.
3. **Victim/Offender Reconciliation Program:** Providing Healing and New Life for Victims and Offenders by Rev. Leonard Stark, President and founder of the Victim/Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP). Rev. Stark is a retired UCC pastor and member of Pleasant Hill Community Church in Tennessee. The program of Cumberland County Tenn. is 22 years old. Mediation is the central focus through face-to-face meetings between victims and offenders in court-referred cases. The success of the Mediation helps keep many out of the penal system and provides peaceful resolution to their conflicts.

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4. Torture in Our Time:

Preventing Torture Everywhere by Rev. Don Smith and Rev. George Hartz. Rev Smith and Rev. Hartz are officers of Action by Christians Against Torture – USA (TN). Rev. Smith presented the



International agreements that deal with torture and how the United States is choosing not to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

The AL-TN Church and Ministry Committee has taken the following actions:

- Renewed the licenses to minister to the following:
Cindy Andrews-Looper, pastor, Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville
Michael Garrett, pastor, First Congregational UCC, Montgomery
Reginald Holloway, pastor, First Congregational UCC, Talladega.
- Transferred the Ordained Ministerial Standing of Chrissie Cataldo, a member of Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville, to Eastern Association, Illinois Conference.
- Voted to grant Ecclesiastical Endorsement to Lillian Hallstrand Strahine in APC. Lillian is a chaplain at Vanderbilt Hospital and a member of Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville.
- Voted to grant member in discernment status to Scott Williamson, a member of Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville and appointed Robert Hurst, the pastor of United Church of Huntsville, Alabama as his adviser.
- Voted to grant privilege of call to Linda Miner, associate pastor at Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham.

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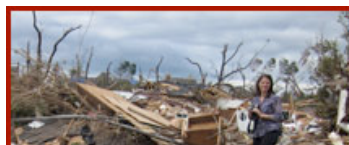
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National UCC Staff, Conference Staff and Volunteers Tour Tornado Damaged Communities in Alabama

Southeast Conference Responds with \$3,526 in Initial Gifts

On May 16, Tim Downs met with Florence Coppola, the UCC Executive Minister of National Disaster Ministries and Angie Wright, the coordinator of disaster response in Alabama to tour the tornado-devastated areas, and meet with FEMA staff and local UCC pastors. They visited areas west of Birmingham, and received briefings concerning the loss of an estimated 300 lives, and property damage estimated in the billions of dollars. In a visit to a local school which had been taken over to distribute relief items and offer case management and support to victims of the tornadoes, they watched volunteers distribute food, clothing, water and much more.



Tim Downs noted that there has been a response of overwhelming generosity from across the United Church of Christ to the needs of those who have suffered. The national church is raising a special offering of \$250,000, and there have been special offering taken in churches across the Conference. The Conference office has received numerous requests to send work crews to assist with the relief and \$3,526 to support the relief effort.

Several times during the tour, we were reminded that following a disaster there is a second disaster, which is the arrival of volunteers and trucks filled with supplies.

UCC News

UCC Newsroom

Headlines from the United Church of Christ

A 'Just Peace' future: Part 2

Following the recently concluded World Council of Churches' International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica, United Church News asked Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite to reflect on the history, progress and potential future of the Just Peace movement.





volunteers and trucks filled with supplies that are often not appropriate to the needs. This tends to burden the disaster relief effort and generate great waste. We were asked to remind people to respond to requests

for specific items directed to specific sites for distribution, or to encourage contributions of money, which can equip our relief efforts. One Great Hour of Sharing has already distributed \$2,000 to each of the UCC churches in the affected areas to help them respond to the great human needs around them.

Florence Coppola noted that the United Church of Christ responds best in providing work crews over a period of years following a disaster. Often the immediate responses overwhelm a system, and then interest fades, although the needs continue. The United Church of Christ will begin to organize work crews out of the national office, and we are beginning to work with local churches in Birmingham to help them set up to host work crews for periods of five days. Tim Downs remarked, "the human cost of these disasters is incomprehensible. One person handed me a DVD as I was touring his destroyed neighborhood. I watched it to see was the story of a young woman walking through her neighborhood which had been blown off the face of the earth, moving slowly from one collapsed house to the next, stopping in front of a library that had been destroyed, and a church which was no longer standing.

At the end of the day, Florence, Tim, and Angie met with the area UCC pastors, Rodney Franklin, Gary Myers and Janet Weidler. Rodney remarked, "my people just want to respond. They see the suffering of their neighbors and they are anxious to reach out and do something. Everyone feels so helpless, but everyone wants to do something". Florence urged churches in the area to begin to prepare themselves to be able to host work groups, and to continue to collect money, and needed supplies in response to specific appeals. Angie urged the group to work with other coalitions of churches and community groups, which are beginning to organize for the long haul.

>> [Link here to read more on how you may help those in need.](#)

**We are deeply grateful for those of you
who have contributed so generously to
tornado relief here in the Southeast Conference.**

**So far we have received \$3,526
from our local congregations which will be contributed
to the \$250,000 goal set by the
United Church of Christ to
be designated for tornado relief.**

**In the last two weeks you have also contributed
\$4,870 to One Great hour of Sharing.
and \$135 to relief for those who suffer
from the tsunami in Japan.**

**The United Church of Christ joins with
the Southeast Conference
to thank you for your response
to our neighbors in the hour of their greatest need.**





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